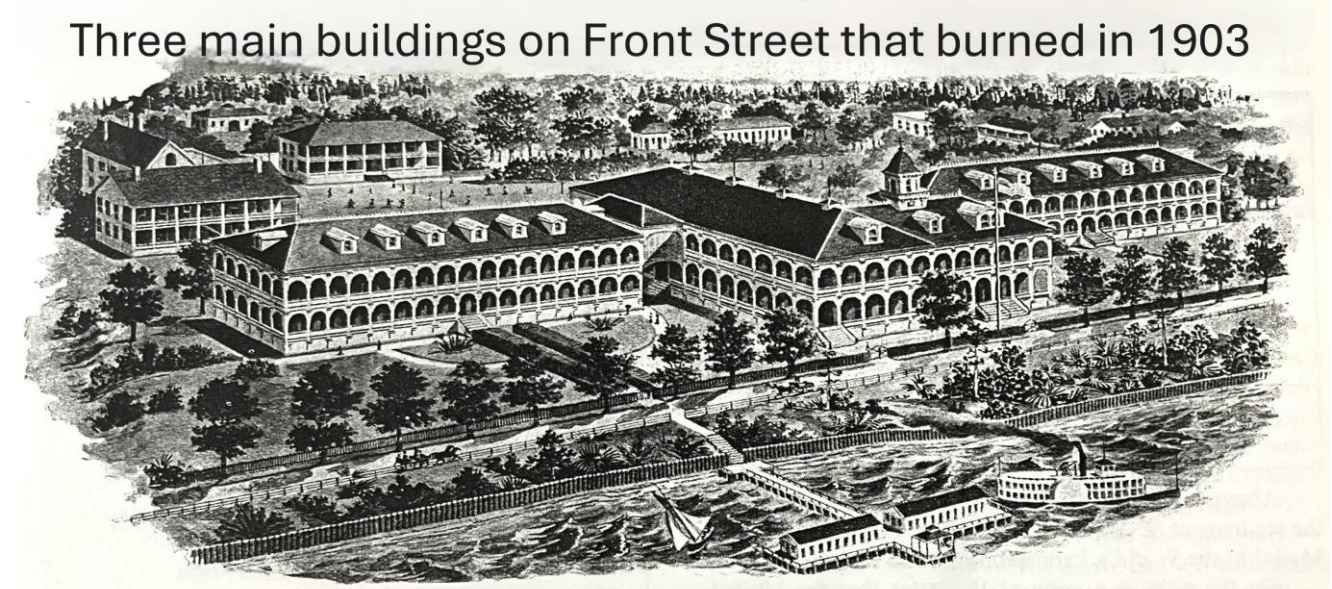
Retro pages #30: 1903 Diary of Prefect Tells All

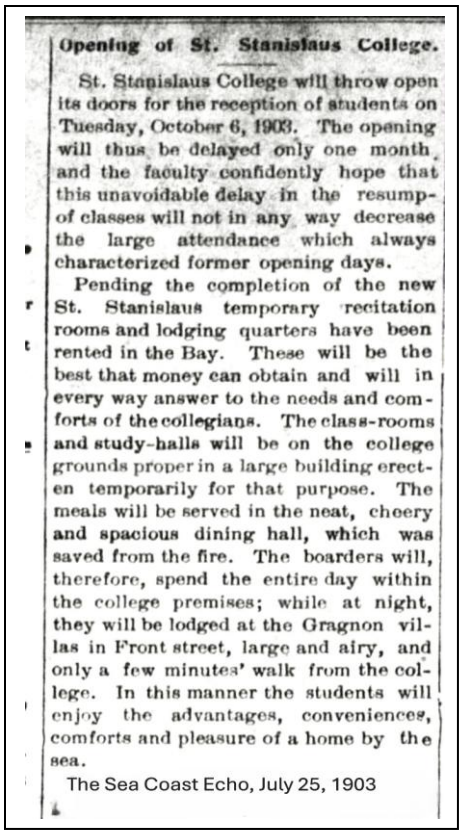
Following the fire of June 1903 that burned St. Stanislaus College to the ground, students vowed to return in the fall even if classes had to take place under the oaks. Thoughts of frustration or discouragement never crossed the minds of students or faculty according to Br. Louis-Felix in his diary.



The imposing picture of St. Stanislaus College that appeared in the 1891 school catalog showed enhancements made in 1891. Arches and galleries designed by James Freret and constructed by Charles Sanger created a pleasing facade and connected the original building to the various additions made to the south in 1867 and to the north in 1882 and 1891.

Br. Felix Hoffman, a native of Bay St. Louis returned to his *alma mater* in July 1903 to rebuild the college as quickly as possible. Amazingly, he and Mr. Charles Sanger, local contractor, completed the task in just six months with magnificent results. In the meantime, a temporary building was constructed for classes, and students returned as promised in October. While construction took place resident students lived in rented cottages along Front Street, now Beach Boulevard.

The local paper, *The Sea Coast Echo* announced in its July 25, 1903, issue that St. Stanislaus College would re-open for the 1903-1904 school session only one month later than usual. The school administration was in the process of constructing a temporary building for classes and making arrangements for students to board at nearby summer cottages that would be available during the fall and winter months.



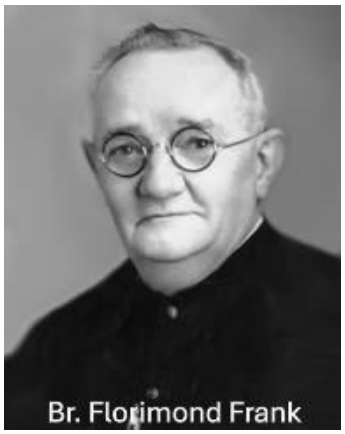
Opening of St. Stanislaus College.

St. Stanislaus College will throw open its doors for the reception of students on Tuesday, October 6, 1903. The opening will thus be delayed only one month, and the faculty confidently hope that this unavoidable delay in the resumption of classes will not in any way decrease the large attendance which always characterized former opening days.

Pending the completion of the new St. Stanislaus temporary recitation rooms and lodging quarters have been rented in the Bay. These will be the best that money can obtain and will in every way answer to the needs and comforts of the collegians. The class-rooms and study-halls will be on the college grounds proper in a large building erected temporarily for that purpose. The meals will be served in the neat, cheery and spacious dining hall, which was saved from the fire. The boarders will, therefore, spend the entire day within the college premises; while at night, they will be lodged at the Gragnon villas in Front street, large and airy, and only a few minutes' walk from the college. In this manner the students will enjoy the advantages, conveniences, comforts and pleasure of a home by the sea.

The Sea Coast Echo, July 25, 1903

Brother Florimond Frank, the senior prefect, recorded in his 1903-04 diary fascinating details of a prefect's life during a year of great adaptation. With good humor, energy, and total dedication, he and other Brothers helped the students survive a year full of surprises and challenges. Since students lived in summer beach cottages on Front Street a few blocks from the school, the prefects escorted them back and forth daily. Below are a few excerpts from Brother's diary:



Br. Florimond Frank

Sept. 19, '03	First brick laid by Br. Felix, President of the College. Cottages have been occupied since Sept. 15 by the following brothers: *Avondale*, Jude & Alfred; *Belle Vue,* Burke & Florimond, *Nellie's Villa*, Mathias & Lambert; *Laura's Villa*, L. Felix & Ludovic.
Sept. 25	Beds arrive, but no springs. Resolved that boys are to sleep on slats and iron bars.
Oct. 6	Boys arrive from New Orleans accompanied by Burke & Lambert. There are 113 places occupied at the first supper.
Oct. 20	Boys are hilarious over their first night on springs.
Oct. 23	Boys today had their first bath in the new bath house. Water is being supplied by the cistern near the kitchen but is insufficient to supply all the tubs. Four boys only can go in at once.
Oct 24	Finished bathing all the boys of senior department. Boys were called out during school to bathe.
Nov. 2	After having worked the whole crowd of large boys for two weeks burning the baseball and football grounds in order to destroy rock-a-chaws, we completed our work today by erecting goals. Old Democrat, a mule that has seen service the past 30 or 40 years tried to haul pine straw from the woods or grove close by, but the poor beast was soon played out. So the boys took the wagons in charge, hitched themselves up to the shafts and pulled and tugged while Old Democrat sat by winking and blinking and most probably thinking of the trick he had played on the good nature of the boys.
Nov 14	The brick-layers this afternoon finished the two wings and were treated by Br. Felix to two kegs of beer. I got my share of the amber-hued liquid.
March 31	Surprise…students told to go to the cottages and disjoint their beds, pack their clothes, so all could sleep in the new dormitory that night. I got very little sleep that night as it was my first attempt at dormitory work.
May 1	Our baseball team left this morning at 9 o'clock for Scranton. The boys are very enthusiastic over their President Br. Felix because he permits them to travel as baseball players. I announced at half past five that the score was 32 to 2 in favor of the college. A mighty cheer went up and it was quickly decided to have a torch light procession to the train on which the team was to arrive. Old Democrat and his cart were decorated and banners prepared.

Postcard made of the school buildings constructed 1903-1904 when Br. Florimond wrote his diary of a prefect. Amazingly as he noted, the first brick was laid by Br. Felix, SSC president, on September 19, 1903, and the students moved into the completed buildings on March 31, 1904.